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*Bringing Together
State Leaders from
Across the Region
to Advocate
for Passenger Rail
Improvements*

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission is an eight-state interstate compact commission that promotes, coordinates and supports regional improvements to passenger rail service. Our member states include Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

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Midwestern Office



March 12, 2025

Dear Chairman Schauer and members of the North Dakota House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee,

My name is Laura Kliewer and I serve as the director of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on a specific aspect of Senate Bill 2308.

I respectfully request that the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee amend SB 2308, **removing the language in the bill that would repeal chapter 8-11.1 of the North Dakota Century Code.**

Chapter 8-11.1 is the enabling language for North Dakota’s membership in the **Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact.**

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, and North Dakota has been a member of this vital interstate compact for most of its existence.

After several years wherein North Dakota’s legislative appointing authorities did not make the two legislative appointments to MIPRC, last year we received legislative representation on the commission, with the appointments of Sen. Wobbema and Rep. Grueneich. Sen. Wobbema was part of the MIPRC delegation that traveled to Washington, D.C. last spring to educate members of Congress on the importance of preserving and improving our region’s passenger rail service; he also participated in the commission’s 2024 annual meeting last fall.

Enacted in 2000, MIPRC brings together state leaders from across the region on a bipartisan basis to work towards developing and implementing a 21st century passenger rail system. States are members through adopting identical compact legislation.

The purpose of MIPRC, through member states and partners, is to promote, coordinate and support passenger rail service improvements through:

- Development and implementation of plans and improvements for Midwest intercity passenger rail service
- Advocacy for Midwestern interests regarding passenger rail development
- Support of our state Departments of Transportation passenger rail plans
- Leadership in the FRA-led regional rail planning efforts

Passenger rail is an important transportation mode for both urban and rural communities; I know that is the case currently with the service that the state has through the *Empire Builder*. Through the years MIPRC has helped save long-distance routes such as North Dakota’s from being discontinued and worked to strengthen and expand passenger rail access.

Being a member state allows North Dakota to benefit from MIPRC’s grants, both in providing input as to the grants’ scopes and in their outcomes.

MIPRC has been awarded a 2024 federal Consolidated Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant, **Invest Midwest**, which will identify potential passenger rail corridors across the region and do the initial planning work of ridership and revenue as well as economic impact analyses for each route.

When we applied for the grant, the entire North Dakota Congressional delegation wrote letters of support. North Dakota DOT staff serve on the grant’s steering committee.

In addition, MIPRC gives states professional networking opportunities, both legislatively and at the agency (DOT) level.

- MIPRC’s annual meeting is the Midwest’s only regional passenger rail information sharing and best practices event. The MIPRC annual meeting is well attended and affords the opportunity to see first-hand passenger rail operations in other locations, which can generate ideas and lead to improvements in your own state.

MIPRC Testimony on North Dakota SB 2308

- MIPRC is also a platform through which issues and challenges can be aired. MIPRC can in turn act as another advocate for the state, and amplify the states' voices at the federal level.

There are many other ways that the commission has provided assistance to our states and helped improve the state/federal relationship for passenger rail. We hope to have the opportunity to provide more detail to the North Dakota Legislature in the future.

As MIPRC's director and on behalf of the commission, I respectfully ask that the committee strike "Chapter 8-11.1" on page 1 and 28 of the current bill and give the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission the opportunity to continue supporting and strengthening North Dakota's passenger rail service through the state remaining a member of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.